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ART. VIII.—*Sparks's American Biography.*

The Library of American Biography. Conducted by
JARED SPARKS. Vol. I. Boston. 1834.

THOSE, who have been in the habit of regarding the Americans as a plain, matter-of-fact, unimaginative race, may be disposed to question the truth of the remark, that there has never been a people, whose fortunes were invested with a more romantic interest. Nothing could be more full of exciting and sometimes almost startling change, than the great panorama of our country's progress, from her birthday to the present hour. We have before us the spectacle of two races, of opposite and very striking characters, brought into collision in the way best fitted to display their peculiar traits, and under circumstances requiring the exertion of their highest energies: of a handful of resolute individuals, erecting in the desert, not merely a temporary asylum for their own security, but the firm walls of a mighty and enduring empire, destined to exert a most momentous influence over the interests of the sons of men; of cities, lifting their spires and turrets amidst the gloom of the scarcely trodden forest; of the rich treasures of commerce, rolling in abundance to a shore, known only within a few generations to the charts of the adventurous mariner; of armies, marching forth to meet the hosts of powerful nations on the spot, where, but a century ago, the dead repose of the wilderness had been unbroken by the sounds of strife. These are but a few of the circumstances, which constitute the strongly marked peculiarity of our national progress; yet even these are quite unlike any thing else, which history had ever exhibited before, and are of far higher interest and attraction. Our fortunes have not resembled those of the Eternal City, whose towers were reared with the rewards of rapine, and whose dominion was sealed exclusively with blood: they are not like those of England, rising by the painful and slow gradations of successive centuries from the very depths of barbarism:—but they are those of a nation, starting from an advanced point to enter on the race of glory, and unfolding all the moral and physical capacities demanded by its new position, in the precise manner, and to the full extent, in which they were required.

A national condition, thus novel in its aspect, must naturally give occasion to an exhibition of character, not often witnessed in the stages of national advancement. The scene of action is a vast one, and requires more than common energy in the personages of the drama. In such an enterprise as the building up of an empire, the erection of a noble and comprehensive system, without any charts to guide those who are employed in the achievement, without any models which they are to imitate, it is not enough, that the leaders should be gifted with commanding power: the centurions, the captains of fifty, and the captains of ten, must rely upon their own resources for the execution of their subordinate, but most important duty. They must have understanding to devise, as well as hands to execute; in those exigencies which constantly occur, where the file affords no precedent, their talent must find its own way, and they must meet every change of circumstances with whatever of spirit and ability, they are able to command. And it will be found, on the most cursory examination of our history, that every kind and degree of capacity have actually been displayed. At an early period, we see the high-souled chivalry of Smith,—the far discerning wisdom and fixed resolve of Winthrop,—the stout heart and vigorous arm of Standish,—and the various qualities of an almost countless host,—all employed, each in its appointed sphere, in accomplishing the different portions of the same great task. Coming down to later times, to the period of the Revolution, we are presented with even more striking illustrations of the force of individual character; they crowd upon the recollection of all who are familiar with our history.

We are led by these considerations to regard the work before us with more than common interest. It would be a very superfluous task, to explain the qualifications of Mr. Sparks for the labor which he has undertaken; apart from any others, the peculiar nature of his pursuits, the results of which are already before the public in many valuable forms, is such as to afford him unusual facilities for its proper execution. His plan embraces the lives of all persons, who have been distinguished in America, from the date of its first discovery to the present time. The completion of this scheme, as he very justly observes, 'would embrace a perfect history of the country, of its social and political progress, its arts, sciences, literature, and improvements of every kind; since these re-

ceive their impulse and direction from a comparatively few eminent individuals, whose achievements of thought and action it is the province of the biographer to commemorate. A hint of such a result,' he proceeds, 'would certainly not be ventured by the editor, if he were not permitted to rely on the aid of a large number of coadjutors, whose names might afford a pledge of its attainment.' Whatever may be thought of the practicability of this scheme, in its full extent, no one can doubt its value, even should it be but partially executed; and if any thing were required to demonstrate its importance, we should find it in the volume, which is already finished. It is precisely such as we had wished and hoped to see; and it affords a happy augury of the character of those which are to follow. They will supply a very important deficiency in our literature. We do not mean to intimate, that the biography of eminent individuals in this country has been very much neglected; on the contrary, a vast number of memorials, from the kingly pyramid to the lowly headstone, have been already reared in memory of the honored dead; but there are many others, to whom a nation's gratitude is due, and to whom this debt of justice has not yet been paid; there are many, whose history is not yet recorded, or if it be so, not in such a form, as would be likely to survive them long. In the very volume before us, we find the lives of four individuals, of original character, of strong and peculiar traits, of decided claims to notice and remembrance, whose names required this commemoration, to give them their just place in the public view. We shall endeavor to give our readers an idea of its contents, by borrowing from it a brief sketch of the history of these individuals, together with such extracts as our limits will permit.

The first in the series is the biography of General John Stark, the well known hero of Bennington, whose adventures are here related by Mr. Edward Everett, with his usual elegance; and the account of them is full of interest. General Stark was one of those men of iron, formed by the harsh discipline of border warfare, who are insensible to fear, and indifferent to danger. He resided in early life at Derryfield, now Manchester, in New Hampshire. At the age of twenty-four, while on a hunting excursion at a distance from the English settlements, he was taken prisoner by the Indians, and soon overcame their prejudices and commanded their respect by the

exhibition, partly from policy, and partly from his habitual contempt of peril, of those qualities which they recognised as the highest virtues. Several curious anecdotes, illustrative of this fact, are related in the volume. He was soon after ransomed; but he remained long enough in the somewhat unpleasant society of the Indians, to acquire a full acquaintance with their habits and character, and a familiarity with suffering and privation, which qualified him for the rough service in which he was subsequently to engage. In 1754, the Seven Years' War began: the great school, as Mr. Everett very justly terms it, in which were trained the leaders of the Revolution. An expedition against Crown Point was included in the plan of campaign for the following year, and Stark received the commission of lieutenant in a corps of rangers, enlisted for this purpose. He continued in the service until nearly the close of the war; rose very early to the rank of Captain; and exhibited throughout, in some very critical emergencies, the cool sagacity and daring bravery, which were among the leading traits of his character. The following anecdote sufficiently illustrates his possession of the former quality.

‘In the month of March, 1757, Fort William Henry was saved by the forethought and vigilance of Captain Stark, then, in the absence of Major Rogers, acting Commander in Chief of the rangers. While going the rounds on the evening of the 16th, he overheard some of his rangers, planning a celebration of St. Patrick's (the following) day. A large portion of this corps was, like himself, of Irish origin. Knowing that there were also a great many Irish among the regular troops, he justly foresaw the danger to which the post would be exposed, at the close of a day to be spent in excess and intoxication. He accordingly gave directions to the sutler that no spirituous liquors should be issued, except by authority of written orders from himself; and when applied to for these orders, he pleaded the lameness of his wrist, produced by a wound, as an excuse for not giving them. In this way, he kept the rangers sober. The Irish troops of the regular army, forming a part of the garrison, celebrated the day with their accustomed license and excess. The French, acquainted with the Irish custom, and calculating upon the consequent disability of the garrison, planned an attack for that night. They were, however, repulsed by Stark's sober rangers, while the stupefied regulars were coming to their senses.’—p. 34.

At the opening of the Revolution, Captain Stark did not

hesitate to sacrifice all his emoluments and prospects as a British officer, by embracing and actively maintaining the patriotic cause; and he labored with extraordinary zeal in preparation for the conflict, which was coming on. His military talent and experience were too well known to be overlooked. On receiving the intelligence of the battle of Lexington, he hurried to the scene of action, with many volunteers from New Hampshire, who were shortly after formed into two regiments by the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts. The command of one of these was given to him; and, being stationed with his regiment at the rail-fence at the memorable battle of Bunker Hill, he exhibited anew the same cool bravery, for which he had now become distinguished. At Trenton and Princeton, also, he was by the side of Washington. In 1777, some junior officers, for what cause is not explained, were promoted over him, and he retired from the service; even then, he fitted out for the army all the members of his family who were old enough to join it, and continued to exhibit his attachment to the cause, by all the means remaining in his power. But this very neglect of Congress, which was then the subject of general regret, became the means of giving new lustre to his name.

The situation of the patriots was at this time very critical. Burgoyne, with his well-appointed army, was advancing from the north, and the important post of Ticonderoga was surrendered without a blow. The frontier was therefore left defenceless. It is animating to survey the conduct of New Hampshire in this exigency. The session of her Assembly was but lately terminated: but, at the summons of the Committee of Safety, it was convened anew; the whole militia of the State was formed into two brigades, the command of one of which was given to Stark; and he was ordered to march immediately at the head of a suitable force to stop the progress of the enemy on the frontier. He accepted the command, on the condition, that he should be responsible only to the authorities of New Hampshire; and it is a curious fact, that his refusal to march west of the Hudson, according to the orders of General Schuyler,—a refusal which was no less judicious in itself, than beneficial to the country,—was the means of placing him in a position to strike the vigorous and effective blow at Bennington. Burgoyne, confiding in his own strength or the weakness of his enemy, detached a body of troops, under the command of

Lieut. Colonel Baum, with orders to obtain supplies for the army, to aid the efforts of the loyalists, and generally to disconcert the councils of the patriots. This detachment was put in motion at the very time when Stark arrived at Bennington. His dispositions were promptly made, and on the 14th of August, he met the enemy. On this and the following day, some skirmishing took place, but nothing at all decisive. The subsequent occurrences can be properly given only in the words of Mr. Everett.

‘On the morning of the 16th, General Stark was joined by Col. Symonds, with a body of Berkshire militia, and made preparations for an attack, according to a plan proposed by the General and agreed upon in a council of war.

‘The German troops, with their battery, were advantageously posted upon a rising ground at a bend in the Wollamsac (a tributary of the Hoosac,) on its north bank. The ground fell off to the north and west, a circumstance of which Stark skilfully took advantage. Peters’s corps of Tories were intrenched on the other side of the stream, in lower ground, and nearly in front of the German battery. The little river, that meanders through the scene of the action, is fordable in all places. Stark was encamped upon the same side of it as the Germans, but, owing to its serpentine course, it crossed his line of march twice on his way to their position. Their post was carefully reconnoitred at a mile’s distance, and the plan of attack was arranged in the following manner. Colonel Nichols, with two hundred men, was detached to attack the rear of the enemy’s left, and Colonel Herrick, with three hundred men, to fall upon the rear of their right, with orders to form a junction before they made the assault. Colonels Hubbard and Stickney were also ordered to advance with two hundred men on their right and one hundred in front, to divert their attention from the real point of attack. The action commenced at three o’clock in the afternoon on the rear of the enemy’s left, when Colonel Nichols, with great precision, carried into effect the dispositions of the commander. His example was followed by every other portion of the little army. General Stark himself moved forward slowly in front, till he heard the sound of the guns from Colonel Nichols’s party, when he rushed upon the Tories, and in a few moments the action became general. “It lasted,” says Stark, in his official report, “two hours, and was the hottest I ever saw. It was like one continued clap of thunder.” The Indians, alarmed at the prospect of being enclosed between the parties of Nichols and Herrick, fled at the commencement of the action, their main principle of battle array

being to contrive or to escape an ambush or an attack in the rear. The Tories were soon driven over the river, and were thus thrown in confusion on the Germans, who were forced from their breast-work. Baum made a brave and resolute defence. The German dragoons, with the discipline of veterans, preserved their ranks unbroken, and, after their ammunition was expended, were led to the charge by their Colonel with the sword : but they were overpowered and obliged to give way, leaving their artillery and baggage on the field.

‘They were well enclosed in two breast-works, which, owing to the rain on the 15th, they had constructed at leisure. But notwithstanding this protection, with the advantage of two pieces of cannon, arms and ammunition in perfect order, and an auxiliary force of Indians, they were driven from their intrenchments by a band of militia just brought to the field, poorly armed, with few bayonets, without field pieces, and with little discipline. The superiority of numbers, on the part of the Americans, will, when these things are considered, hardly be thought to abate any thing from the praise due to the conduct of their commander, or the spirit and courage of his men.

‘The enemy being driven from the field, the militia dispersed to collect the plunder. Scarcely had they done so, before intelligence was brought that a reinforcement from the British army was on the march, and within two miles’ distance. This was the corps of Colonel Breyman, which had been despatched by General Burgoyne, on receiving from Baum intelligence of his position. The rain of the preceding day and the badness of the roads had delayed his arrival : a circumstance which exercised a very important influence on the fate of the battle. On the approach of Breyman’s reinforcements, the flying party of Baum made a rally, and the fortune of the day was for a moment in suspense. Stark made an effort to rally the militia : but happily at this juncture, Colonel Warner’s regiment came up fresh and not yet engaged, and fell with vigor upon the enemy.

‘This regiment, since the battle fought at Hubbardston, had been stationed at Manchester. It had been reduced, by the loss sustained in that action, to less than two hundred men. Warner, their Colonel, as we have seen, was at Bennington, and was with General Stark on the 14th. The regiment at Manchester was under the command of Major Samuel Safford. In consequence of the absence of a large number of the men on a scouting party, and other causes, it was not possible to put the regiment in motion on the 14th ; on the 15th they marched for Bennington. Owing to the heavy rain of that day, it was near midnight, when the troops arrived within a mile of Bennington. Fatigued with the march of the preceding day, their arms and equipments injured by

the rain, and their ammunition scanty, a considerable portion of the ensuing day was exhausted, before the men could prepare themselves for battle. The first assault had been made in the manner described, and the enemy driven from the field, before this regiment came into action. At the most critical moment of the day, when the arrival of Breyman's reinforcement threatened a reverse of its good fortune, Warner's troops appeared on the field. Stark, with what men he had been able to rally, pushed forward to his assistance, and the battle was contested with great obstinacy on both sides till sunset, when the enemy were obliged to give way. General Stark pursued their flying forces until dark, and was obliged to draw off his men, to prevent them from firing at each other under cover of night. "With one hour more of daylight," as he writes in his official report, "he would have captured the whole body." The fruits of the victory were four pieces of brass cannon, several hundred stand of arms, eight brass drums, a quantity of German broadswords, and about seven hundred prisoners. Two hundred and seven were killed upon the spot; the number of the wounded was not ascertained. Colonel Baum was wounded and made a prisoner, and shortly after died of his wounds. The loss of the Americans was thirty killed and forty wounded.—pp. 84—89.

Several anecdotes of this affair have been recorded, and the following deserves a repetition. Among the reinforcements from Berkshire county came a clergyman, with a portion of his flock, resolved to make bare the arm of flesh against the enemies of the country. Before daylight on the morning of the 16th, he addressed the commander as follows. "We the people of Berkshire, have been frequently called upon to fight, but have never been led against the enemy. We have now resolved, if you will not let us fight, never to turn out again." General Stark asked him "if he wished to march then, when it was dark and rainy." "No," was the answer. "Then," continued Stark, "if the Lord should once more give us sunshine, and I do not give you fighting enough, I will never ask you to come again." The weather cleared up in the course of the day, and the men of Berkshire followed their spiritual guide into action.—p. 97.

The consequences of this battle were no less striking, than the skill and conduct of the conqueror. Burgoyne's operations were completely paralyzed, and, in the following month, he capitulated with his army. Stark received the thanks of his own State, and of Congress, and was immediately reinstated in the Continental service, in which he continued until the close of the active period of the war. The remainder of his life

presents no incident of material importance ; he died in 1822, at the age of ninety-four, having survived all the generals of the Revolution, with the single exception of Sumpter. His history is, however, very interesting and instructive ; it shows how much may be effected by resolute patriotism, under circumstances of the most unfavorable character ; and we are happy that it has been at length presented to the public in the very attractive form, in which every thing from the pen of Mr. Everett is sure to be invested.

The life of Charles Brockden Brown is the second of the series ; and presents us, in the history of an amiable and retiring scholar, with a striking contrast to the adventure of the bold and active partisan. It is written by Mr. William H. Prescott, and executed with great discrimination, as well as with his usual taste and elegance. We are inclined to believe that the merit of Brown is not, at this day, fully appreciated : the circumstances of the country, particularly as relates to literature, are so altered since his time, that we can hardly represent him to our fancy as entering upon a scarcely trodden track, and, though acquiring reputation, deserving even more than he acquired. Though gentle as a child, and with more than just humility in his estimation of his own deserts, there was something bold and original in his character ; his tastes and pursuits were formed by solitary musing, instead of being stimulated by the example or success of others. In the outset of his career, this spirit of independence led him into the adoption and defence of many wild theories ; but his natural good sense found its own way, and he returned to the true path, as the tempest-tost vessel, after falling for a moment from her course, again obeys her helm, and walks in triumph on the sea. He was one of those, who take more pleasure in communion with their own hearts, or with the visible world, than with their fellow men ; a deep shade of melancholy, the result perhaps of constant bodily infirmity, hung over him ; and he fled to literary engagements rather as a relief, than as a welcome task. His melancholy and retirement were not, however, of that kind, which render the soul insensible to any happiness or suffering but its own. Mr. Prescott has given a delightful picture of his character and social feelings, particularly at the period, when, after having accomplished many of the purposes of life, he was sinking to the grave by slow decay. The false opinions, by which his earlier years were overclouded, had

then yielded to the convictions of his manly and discriminating intellect; and he went to his rest, not only in the full persuasion of religious truth, but exhibiting a fine example of its power.

It is upon Brown's romances, that his fame will principally rest, though they were evidently written with little care, and with a rapidity which gave no indication, that he expected from them much success. Wieland, the first of them, was published in 1798, when he was at the age of twenty-seven. This was some time prior to the period, which may be not inappropriately termed the era of romances. They were then the reader's luxury, rather than his daily bread; the embroidery, and not the texture of the literary garment. The sentimental novel had not yet made its first ascension; and the historical romance was still to be discovered. As far as he can be said to have followed any model, it is Godwin; though even here, as his biographer remarks with truth, there is no servile imitation: the resemblance consists rather in some characteristics of style and subject, than in the substance; and it is worthy of remark, that these are the precise qualities in which he least excels. His leading defect is a want of taste, rather than of power; he wished to make an anatomical dissection of the heart, to develop all its qualities and passions; but he forgot, that processes of this sort, however valuable their results may be, are not remarkably poetical. In laboring to be striking, he lost sight of truth and nature. There was a fearful grandeur in his exhibition of the soul, driven onward by resistless passion; but the different portions of the picture are not in perfect keeping, and the imperfection of some impairs the effect and impression of the rest. The real secret of the art was yet to be revealed; Scott, perhaps, was the first to disclose it: it was, that the heroes of romance may live and move and act like other men, without ceasing to be heroes. The error of Brown consisted in his acting on a false theory; but it is perhaps the strongest proof which could be given of his real power, that, be his imperfections what they may, his works are still read with admiration, if not with pleasure, and that, even while we most regret the selection of his subjects, we are not the less impressed with respect for the talent of the writer. A remark of nearly the same kind is applicable to his style; it sometimes repels us by its affectation, or offends us by its want of taste: but it is manly and peculiar, and when the subject rises to a certain level, is full of life and strength.

Mr. Prescott, though a liberal biographer, has not suffered his partialities to render him insensible to the defects of this amiable writer; he has, on the contrary, pointed out several of them with great taste and judgment, in commenting upon the romances. His remarks on Wieland, in particular, are a model of judicious criticism. In this tale, the whole machinery is set in motion by the agency of ventriloquism; the hero is thus wrought up to the murder of his wife and children, the secret agent all the while being actuated by no other apparent motive, than a wanton spirit of mischief. The improbability here is too violent for the credulity of the easiest believer. We are led onward by the strong painting of fiery passion to the close, but when we have reached it, we are equally dissatisfied with the author and ourselves. It is but just to say, however, that all these tales were written before the author reached the age of thirty-four, and that the residue of his life was devoted to other labors, in the field of politics and general literature. In the year 1809, the illness, which had so long attended him, began to assume a more serious aspect, and, being very averse to foreign travel, he made some journeys with the faint hope of restoration. The account of the conclusion of his life will best be given in the words of Mr. Prescott.

‘Finding these brief excursions productive of no salutary change in his health, he at length complied with the entreaties of his friends, and determined to try the effect of a voyage to Europe in the following spring. That spring he was doomed never to behold. About the middle of November, he was taken with a violent pain in his left side, for which he was bled. From that time forward he was confined to his chamber. His malady was not attended with the exemption from actual pain, with which nature seems sometimes willing to compensate the sufferer for the length of its duration. His sufferings were incessant and acute; and they were supported, not only without a murmur, but with an appearance of cheerfulness, to which the hearts of his friends could but ill respond. He met the approach of death in the true spirit of Christian philosophy. No other dread, but that of separation from those dear to him on earth, had power to disturb his tranquillity for a moment. But the temper of his mind in his last hours is best disclosed in a communication from that faithful partner, who contributed, more than any other, to support him through them. “He always felt for others more than for himself; and the evidences of sorrow in those around him, which could not at all times be suppressed, appeared to affect

him more than his own sufferings. Whenever he spoke of the probability of a fatal termination of his disease, it was in an indirect and covered manner, as "you must do so and so, when I am absent," or "when I am asleep." He surrendered not up one faculty of his soul but with his last breath. He saw death in every step of his approach, and viewed him as a messenger that brought with him no terrors. He frequently expressed his resignation; but his resignation was not produced by apathy or pain; for while he bowed with submission to the Divine will, he felt with the keenest sensibility his separation from those who made this world but too dear to him. Towards the last he spoke of death without disguise, and appeared to wish to prepare his friends for the event, which he felt to be approaching. A few days previous to his change, as sitting up in the bed, he fixed his eyes upon the sky, and desired not to be spoken to until he first spoke. In this position, and with a serene countenance, he continued for some minutes, and then said to his wife, "when I desired you not to speak to me, I had the most transporting and sublime feelings I have ever experienced: I wanted to enjoy them and know how long they would last;" concluding with requesting her to remember the circumstance.

'A visible change took place in him on the morning of the 19th of February, 1810; and he caused his family to be assembled around his bed, when he took leave of each one of them in the most tender and impressive manner. He lingered however a few days longer, remaining in the full possession of his faculties, to the 22d of the month, when he expired without a struggle. He had reached the thirty-ninth year of his age, the month preceding his death. The family which he left, consisted of a widow and four children.'

'There was nothing striking in Brown's personal appearance. His manners, however, were distinguished by a gentleness and unaffected simplicity, which rendered them extremely agreeable. He possessed colloquial powers, which do not always fall to the lot of the practised and ready writer. His rich and various acquisitions supplied an unfailling fund for the edification of his hearers. They did not lead him, however, to affect an air of superiority, or to assume too prominent a part in the dialogue, especially in large or mixed company, where he was rather disposed to be silent, reserving the display of his powers for the unrestrained intercourse of friendship. He was a stranger, not only to base and malignant passions, but to the paltry jealousies which sometimes sour the intercourse of men of letters. On the contrary, he was ever prompt to do ample justice to the merits of others. His heart was warm with the feeling of universal be-

nevolence. Too sanguine and romantic views had exposed him to some miscalculations, and consequent disappointments ; from which, however, he was subsequently retrieved by the strength of his understanding, which, combining with what may be called his natural education of soul, enabled him to settle the soundest principles for the regulation of his opinions and conduct in after life.'—pp. 170–173.

Such were the last hours, and such the character of one, to whom his countrymen have scarcely yet been just ; who cultivated literature, at a time when literature in this country had few rewards or honors to bestow ; and who amply merits the still higher praise, of adding to his literary ardor a still warmer zeal for manly sentiment and virtue.

We next turn to the history of the chivalrous Montgomery, one of the earliest and noblest victims of the Revolutionary cause ; and the purity of style in which General Armstrong has related it, only increases our regret, that so little is remembered of his short, but honorable career. Short as it was, it acquired for him an enviable name ; at a period when noble qualities were by no means rare, he was distinguished by his combination of the sterner with the gentler virtues ; and though he perished at the very opening of the war, and in the moment of disaster, his loss was universally regarded as a public calamity. The story of his life is briefly told. He was born in 1736, at Raphoe, in the north of Ireland. At the age of eighteen, he procured a commission in the British army, and began his career of active service in this country ; the regiment to which he belonged being attached to the expedition, prepared in 1758, for the capture of Louisburg. In this enterprise, and in two subsequent expeditions for the reduction of St. Pierre and Fort Royal, in Martinico, and of Havana in Cuba, his bravery and talent were equally conspicuous. From the period intervening between the termination of the war, and his retirement from the army in 1772, nothing relating to his personal history appears to have been preserved ; and there is no evidence, excepting that of vague tradition, of the causes which induced him to retire ; it is rumored, that it was in consequence of a persuasion, that the agency of government was twice employed to prevent him from procuring a majority. Immediately afterwards, he came over to this country, and devoted himself to the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, until in April, 1775, he was elected a member of the first Provincial Con-

vention held in New York. Two months afterwards, when the National Congress began to organize an army, the commission of a brigadier-general was bestowed on him. The attention of that body was very early directed towards the invasion of Canada : it was proposed to effect this object by two routes, one by the Sorel, the other by the Kennebec ; and for these purposes, two armaments were formed, the more important of which, designed for the first mentioned route, was assigned to General Montgomery. The history of his efforts to accomplish this enterprise is very generally known : in two months from the time of his departure from Ticonderoga, he entered Montreal, and though laboring under the discouragements arising from the inadequacy of his means, prepared himself for the great object of his hopes, the reduction of Quebec. He determined, if possible, to effect this by an attack in the night-time on the lower town ; and we give the history of this assault, and its unfortunate result, in the animated language of the author.

‘ The troops were ordered to parade in three divisions in the morning of the 31st of December ; the New York regiments and part of Easton’s Massachusetts militia, at Holland House ; the Cambridge detachments and Lamb’s company of artillery, with one field piece, at Captain Morgan’s quarters ; and the two small corps of Livingston and Brown, at their respective grounds of parade. To the first and second of these divisions were assigned the two assaults, to be made on opposite sides of the lower town ; and to the third, a series of demonstrations or feigned attacks on the opposite sides of the upper. Under these orders the movement began between three and four o’clock in the morning, from the heights of Abraham ; Montgomery advancing at the head of the first division by the river road, round the foot of Cape Diamond to Aunsee au Mere ; and Arnold, at the head of the second, through the suburbs of St. Roque, to the Saut des Matelots. Both columns found the roads much obstructed by snow : but to this obstacle on the route taken by Montgomery were added huge masses of ice, thrown up from the river, and so narrowing the passage round the foot of the promontory, as greatly to retard the progress, and disturb the order of the march. These difficulties being at last surmounted, the first barrier was approached, vigorously attacked, and rapidly carried. A moment, and but a moment, was now employed to re-excite the ardor of the troops, which the fatigue of the march and the severity of the weather had somewhat abated. “ Men of New York,” exclaim-

ed Montgomery, "you will not fear to follow where your General leads,—march on ;" then placing himself again in the front, he pressed eagerly forward to the second barrier, and when but a few paces from the mouths of the British cannon, received three wounds, which instantly terminated his life and his labors. 'Thus fell, in the first month of his fortieth year, Major General Richard Montgomery.'

It is needless to add, that this event decided the fortune of the day ; the subsequent efforts served only vainly to display the gallantry of the assailing army. The corpse of Montgomery was interred within the walls of the city, which he had nearly made his own ; all hostile recollections yielded to the respect and admiration due to a gallant and honorable foe. The following is the estimate of his character and personal qualities, which is formed by his biographer.

'In this brief story of a short and useful life, we find all the elements which enter into the composition of a great man and distinguished soldier ; "a happy physical organization, combining strength and activity, and enabling its possessor to encounter laborious days and sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, all changes of weather, and every variation of climate." To these corporal advantages was added a mind, cool, discriminating, energetic and fearless ; thoroughly acquainted with mankind, not uninstructed in the literature and science of the day, and habitually directed by a high and unchangeable moral sense. That a man so constituted, should have won "the golden opinions" of friends and foes, is not extraordinary. The most eloquent men of the British Senate became his panegyrists ; and the American Congress hastened to testify for him "their grateful remembrance, profound respect, and high veneration." A monument to his memory was accordingly erected, on which might justly be inscribed the impressive lines of the poet.

"Brief, brave and glorious was his young career :
His mourners were two hosts, his friends and foes ;
And fitly may the stranger, lingering here,
Pray for his gallant spirit's bright repose ;
For he was Freedom's champion, one of those,
The few in number, who had not o'erstept
The charter to chastise, which she bestows
On such as wield her weapons ; he had kept
The whiteness of his soul, and thus men o'er him wept."

The volume closes with another striking contrast, in the biography of that extraordinary personage, Ethan Allen ; who added very few of the graces of chivalry to his iron nerve

and unconquerable spirit. This is the production of Mr. Sparks, who has brought to light many particulars of Allen's history not generally known, and presented them in a very clear and interesting narrative. The precise time of his birth is not ascertained, but, with several other members of his family, he emigrated in early life, from Connecticut, his native State, to the New Hampshire Grants, which have since been erected into the flourishing State of Vermont. The title to these Grants had long been the subject of controversy between New Hampshire and New York; Wentworth, the royal governor of the former, had issued patents, under which tracts had been sold to a great number of settlers, among whom were Allen and his brothers. New York, in order to assert her claim, granted new patents to other persons, covering the same lands on which the grantees of New Hampshire had established themselves; and a series of difficulties forthwith arose, which were not quieted for many years. Allen, whose boldness and energy gave him a strong ascendancy over the minds of those around him, took a very leading part in the vindication of what they deemed their legal rights. We have not room to relate the history of these transactions. The settlers, or, as they were called, *Green Mountain Boys*, resisted the New York claim in the courts of Albany, but the judgments of the courts being unhesitatingly pronounced against them, they took decisive means to prevent their execution, by dispossessing those who entered under them, and treating the civil officers with the least imaginable ceremony. We may perceive to what extent the exasperation on both sides was carried, from the fact, that a proclamation was early issued by the Governor of New York, offering a reward of twenty pounds for the apprehension of Allen, and that of eight other persons, who were associated with him. A law of a most remarkable character was enacted by the Assembly of New York, in opposition to the same individuals. This law began with naming Allen and several others; it then empowered the Governor and Council to issue an order, requiring these persons to surrender themselves to justice; if they neglected to do this, they were to be adjudged and taken as convicted, and to suffer death if indicted for a capital offence, and the Supreme Court was empowered to award execution, in the same manner as if there had been an actual trial and sentence. As Allen himself remarked, these printed sentences of death were not partic-

ularly fatal, but it is difficult to say to what extent the contest would have been carried, had not the Revolutionary troubles at this time begun to absorb all others.

The capture of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, which was effected by parties from Connecticut and the New Hampshire Grants, with Allen at their head, gave an indication of the spirit with which he was about to enter on the new scene of conflict. When this had been accomplished, he took command of the former post, and began to meditate the conquest of Canada; an enterprise, the credit of suggesting which belongs to him, and which, had it been undertaken by Congress with more activity and vigor, would not improbably have proved successful. A regiment of Green Mountain Boys was raised, under the authority of the Provincial Congress of New York, to be connected with the army; for some reason, not now remembered, Allen did not receive the command of it, but attached himself to General Schuyler's army as a volunteer. He was first employed to circulate an address, issued by the General, among the inhabitants of Canada, and to ascertain their disposition; this commission he executed in a very satisfactory manner; and he next proceeded to raise a corps of Canadian volunteers, with which he was about to join the army of Montgomery, now the leader of the Canada expedition, when, at the suggestion of Major Brown, whom he encountered at the head of another party, he was induced to lend his aid in an attack on Montreal. The plan was laid, and Allen's part of it was faithfully performed; but as Brown did not adhere to his, Allen was compelled to surrender. General Prescott, the commander of the British force at Montreal, after threatening him with a halter at Tyburn, gave orders that he should be bound hand and foot, and sent on board a vessel of war. With his ankles confined in shackles, to which was attached a bar of iron eight feet long, and with his hands in fetters, he was accordingly thrust into the lowest part of the vessel, without a bed or any article of furniture. In this condition he was taken to Quebec, where he was transferred for the moment to the charge of a gentleman, who removed his irons; but when Arnold appeared with his army in the neighborhood of that city, he was placed on board another vessel, manacled as before, and sent to England. During this voyage of forty days, Allen and thirty-three others, in fetters like himself, were confined in a single apartment, which they were not once per-

mitted to leave. On his arrival in England, he was still suffered to remain in irons, though he was treated with somewhat less harshness.

‘Notwithstanding the comparative amelioration of his circumstances, Colonel Allen’s mind was not perfectly at ease in regard to the future. General Prescott’s hint about his gracing a halter at Tyburn, rested upon his thoughts, and gave him some uneasiness amidst the uncertain prospects now before him. But despondency and fear made no part of his character, and, even when hope failed, his fortitude was triumphant. Prepared for the worst that might happen, he bethought himself of trying the effect of a stratagem. He asked permission to write a letter to the Continental Congress, which was granted. He depicted in vivid colors the treatment he had received from the beginning of his captivity, but advised the Congress not to retaliate, till the fate that awaited him in England should be known, and then to execute the law of retaliation not in proportion to the small influence of his character in America, but to the extent demanded by the importance of the cause for which he had suffered. The despatch was finished, and handed over for inspection to the officer, who had permitted him to write. This officer went to him the next day, and reprimanded him for what he called the impudence of inditing such an epistle. “Do you think we are fools in England,” said he, “and would send your letter to Congress with instructions to retaliate on our own people? I have sent your letter to Lord North.” This was precisely the destination for which the writer intended it, and he felt a secret satisfaction that his artifice had succeeded.’—pp. 304-5.

It seems almost incredible at this day, that an individual, whose only offence consisted in his having fought the battles of his country, should have been thus dealt with by the officers of a civilized and enlightened nation; but patriotism was not then a pardonable offence; it bore the united names of treason and rebellion. Owing however, either to the reprobation in which this severity was generally held, or to the menaces of retaliation, the British Government at length resolved to treat Allen and his companions as prisoners of war, and send them to their country. On his return, and until the period of his final release, he had an additional measure of harsh usage and privation to undergo, which would have broken a less stern and haughty spirit. The whole term of his captivity was two years and seven months. ‘Insensibility,’ as Mr. Sparks observes, ‘made no part of his nature,’ and the following inci-

dent, which occurred towards the close of his imprisonment, deserves to be recorded, as illustrative of his character.

‘The Lark frigate, on board of which were Mr. Lovell, Colonel Allen and their companions, sailed from Halifax about the middle of October. Luckily they found themselves at last under an officer, Captain Smith, who treated them with the politeness of a gentleman, and with the feelings of a man capable of sympathizing in the distresses of the unfortunate. The first interview is thus described by Colonel Allen. “When I came on deck, he met me with his hand, welcomed me to his ship, invited me to dine with him that day, and assured me that I should be treated as a gentleman, and that he had given orders that I should be treated with respect by the ship’s crew. This was so unexpected and sudden a transition, that it drew tears from my eyes, which all the ill usages I had before met with were not able to produce; nor could I at first hardly speak, but soon recovered myself, and let him know that I felt anxiety of mind in reflecting, that his situation and mine were such, that it was not probable it would ever be in my power to return the favor. Captain Smith replied, that he had no reward in view, but only treated me as a gentleman ought to be treated. He said, this is a mutable world, and one gentleman never knows but it may be in his power to help another.”

‘An opportunity soon occurred of verifying this last remark. They had not been at sea many days, when it was discovered that a conspiracy was on foot to destroy the Captain and the principal officers, and seize the ship. An American captain, who had commanded an armed vessel, and been recently taken prisoner, was the chief conspirator. He revealed his designs to Colonel Allen and Mr. Lovell, requesting their coöperation in bringing over the other prisoners, about thirty in number, and telling them that several of the crew were ready to join in the plot. It was known that there were thirty-five thousand pounds in money in the vessel, and the plan of the conspirators was to take the ship into an American port, where they expected to divide the booty according to the usual rules of captures. Without waiting to discuss the laws of war, or to reason about the infamy and criminality of such an act with men, who were prepared to execute it, Colonel Allen declared with his usual decision and vehemence, that he would not listen a moment to such a scheme; that, in its mildest character, it was a base and wicked return for the kind treatment they had received, and that he would at every personal hazard defend Captain Smith’s life. This rebuff was unexpected by the conspirators, and it threw them into a dis-

troubling dilemma, since the fear of detection was now as appalling to them as the danger of their original enterprise. They then requested him to remain neutral, and let them proceed in their own way, but this he peremptorily refused: and he finally succeeded in quelling the conspiracy, by adhering to his resolution, and promising, that, as he had been consulted in confidence, he would not divulge the matter, if the leaders would pledge themselves instantly to abandon the design. In the present state of things they were glad to accept such terms. At the conclusion of this affair, Colonel Allen was forcibly reminded of the words of Captain Smith.'—pp. 315–317.

Congress endeavored to repair the wrongs of one who had thus suffered in their cause, by granting him a brevet commission of colonel in the Continental army; but it is not known that he entered upon actual service. The flame of the old controversy between Vermont and New York had burst forth anew, and Allen, as before, engaged in the conflict with his whole heart and soul; laboring, haranguing and writing, with abundant zeal and with no small effect, in the old and familiar cause. His fellow-citizens expressed their sense of the value of his aid, by appointing him general and commander in chief of the militia of the State, a station, at that time, of great responsibility. Propositions were made him by the enemy, to detach Vermont from her allegiance; these he communicated to Congress, and continued to defend the interests of his State and country until the conclusion of the war, when he retired to private life, and devoted himself to the occupation of a farmer. But his pursuits were not exclusively of this character. In 1784, he published a work, which his biographer denominates 'a crude and worthless performance, in which truth and error, reason and sophistry, knowledge and ignorance, ingenuity and presumption, are mingled together in a chaos, which the author denominates a system.' In this production, which he entitled a *Compendious System of Natural Religion*, he argues that the Christian Revelation and the Old Testament are false, while he declares his belief in a future state of reward and punishment. He appears, in fact, to have embraced the principles of deism. The short residue of his life was not distinguished by any important incident. He died at Burlington, in 1789.

This biography furnishes a striking instance, if any such were wanting, of the industry and talent with which Mr. Sparks

illustrates every subject on which he is employed. There is a great variety of interesting detail in this article, to which we have found no space, even to allude. It is, however, an act of justice to the memory of Ethan Allen to say, that his biographer has formed a more favorable estimate of his character, than has been generally entertained. His roughness of manner and coarseness, his presumption and skepticism, though not to be defended, are yet palliated by the circumstances of his early education and condition. On the other hand, he was frank and generous; courageous in the most emphatic sense of the word; benevolent and kind in his private relations, and in his public ones, firm, honest and true.

It is stated by the editor in his preface, that this beginning is only an experiment, to be pursued or laid aside as circumstances may dictate. He proposes to publish four volumes within the compass of a year; and should sufficient encouragement be afforded, to continue the work by the publication of a volume quarterly. We are reluctant to believe, that encouragement, for such a work, will be likely to be wanting; the subject recommends itself to the attention of all readers, and the execution thus far justifies, in all respects, the highest expectations for the future.

ART. IX.—*Memoir of John Cotton.*

Memoir of John Cotton, by John Norton, with a Preface and Notes. By ENOCH POND, Professor of Theology in the Theological Seminary of Bangor, Maine. Boston. 1834.

THIS is a reprint of a morsel of biography, which time had made scarce, exhibiting a brief memoir of one of the earliest and most honored of the Fathers of New England, written by his successor in the ministry, and in some large measure, the successor, also, to his honors and fame. Dr. Cotton Mather, who never failed in his own way to gather what advantage he could from a name, ranked him as the first of the four celebrated Johns,* to whom was afterwards added a fifth,—who, as

* John Cotton died in 1652. John Norton in 1663. John Wilson in 1667. John Davenport in 1670, and John Oxenbridge in 1674.